

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 026567

FOLLOWING REPEAT MONROVIA 0651 ACTION STATE INFO MOSCOW JAN 27.

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L MONROVIA 0651

DEPT PASS OAU COLLECTIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, LI, PINT, PROP, LM
SUBJECT: LIBERIAN IMPRESSIONS OF THE "WEEK OF SOLIDARITY" IN
BENIN JANUARY 16-19

1. IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE ACTING DCM JANUARY 26, GOL
ASSISTANT FOREIGN MINISTER FOR ASIAN AND AFRICAN AFFAIRS
CHRISTOPHER MINIKON GAVE HIS IMPRESSIONS OF THE "WEEK OF
SOLIDARITY TO SUPPORT NATIONS AND PEOPLES IN THEIR STRUGGLE,"
HELD IN CONONOU JANUARY 16-19. MINIKON, WHO REPRESENTED
THE GOL AT THE "WEEK OF SOLIDARITY", COMMENTED THAT THE
MEETING APPEARED TO HIM TO HAVE BEEN STAGED PRIMARILY TO
PROVIDE ALGERIA THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROMOTE POLISARIO.
JUDGING FROM THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SOVIET DELEGATES, HE
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ASSUMED THAT THE USSR PROVIDED MOST OF THE FINANCING AND
MANAGEMENT FOR THE "WEEK."

2. THE BENIN GOVERNMENT SPENT ONE DAY GOING THROUGH ITS
CASE AGAINST THE ALLEGED MERCENARY RAID OF LAST YEAR
AN EFFORT WHICH MINIKON FOUND UNCONVINCING. PASSPORTS
AND DOCUMENTS OF FRENCH, GABONESE AND MOROCCAN ORIGIN,

PURPORTEDLY BELONGING TO MERCENARIES, WERE DISPLAYED, AS WELL AS ONE GUINEAN PRISONER WHO TOLD THE DELEGATES HE HAD BEEN RECRUITED HE THOUGHT TO FIGHT SEKOU TOURE, BUT WHO LATER FOUND HIMSELF IN COTONOU. MINIKON SAID HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND HOW THE MERCENARIES HAD BEEN ABLE TO GET THEIR WEAPONS INTO POSITION FOR THEIR ATTACK ON THE PALACE WITHOUT BEING DETECTED. AT 3 P.M., THE DELEGATES--FAMISHED AND EXHAUSTED AFTER SIX HOURS OF EXPOSURE TO PROPAGANDA ON THE RAID WITHOUT LUNCH BREAK--BEGGED TO BE EXCUSED FROM VIEWING THD CORPSES OF TWO ALLEGED MERCENARIES KILLED IN THE ATTACK AND WERE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO THE CONFERENCE HOTEL.

3. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING, AS RESOLUTIONS BEGAN TO BE ADOPTED BY ACCLAMATION, MINIKONSREALIZED THAT THE GOL WOULD APPEAR IN CONFERENCE RECORDS TO HAVE SUPPORTED POSITIONS IT IN FACT OPPOSES UNLESS HE TOOK COUNTER-ACTION. AFTER HASTY DISCUSSIONS WITH HIS NIGERIAN COLLEAGUE, MINIKON ROSE TO STATE THAT THE GOL ENTERED A BLANKET RESERVATION WITH REGARD TO ANY RESOLUTION NOT IN ACCORD WITH THE OFFICIAL GOL STATEMENT MADE AT THE CONFERENCE, OR WITH ESTABLISHED GOL POLICIES. THE NIGERIAN AND GHANIAN DELEGATES FOLLOWED MUCH THE SAME TACTIC.

4. MINIKON FOUND ATTENDANCE AT THE "WEEK OF SOLIDARITY" USEFUL TO HIM PERSONALLY IN PROVIDING A WIDER KNOWLEDGE
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OF THE WORKING OF FRONT-TYPE CONFERENCES BUT EXPRESSED HIS USUAL DISTASTE FOR THE TENDENCY OF GOVERNMENTS, PARTICULARLY AFRICAN, TO "WASTE TIME" AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES WHEN RESOURCES WOULD BE BETTER DEVOTED TO URGENT MATTERS OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

5. COMMENT: THE TOLBERT ADMINISTRATION FINDS ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS SUCH AS THIS USEFUL IN DEMONSTRATING THE INDEPENDENT ROLE WHICH IT WISHES TO PLAY IN REGIONAL AND WORLD AFFAIRS. BY ENTERING RESERVATIONS TO RESOLUTIONS TO WHICH IT DOES NOT SUBSCRIBE, IT SEEKS TO AVOID BEING MANIPULATED BY CONFERENCE SPONSORS BUT DOES SO IN A WAY WHICH DOES NOT OFFEND. ABOVE ALL, THE GOL SEEKS TO PROMOTE IN THIS MANNER ITS GOAL OF DEVELOPING A REPUTATION AS A NATION WHICH CAN BE CALLED UPON TO ACT AS MEDIATOR.
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